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OT520 Old Testament Introduction

Asbury Theological Seminary
Fall 2002

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"Apply the whole of yourself to the text; apply the whole of the text to yourself." - Bengel

I love teaching this course. I am excited about the opportunity to work simultaneously with students from both campuses. It is my prayer that as we enter the world of the Scriptures of Ancient Israel that we will emerge better prepared to serve as interpreters of Scripture *and* become more profound people in the process.

I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to (1) the literature of the Old Testament in its socio-historical, literary, and canonical contexts; and (2) critical study of the OT.

II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course with a grade of C or better, the student will be able to :

- A. Describe the history and geography of the Ancient Near East as it relates to the Old Testament;
- B. Narrate the history of the interpretation of the Old Testament;
- C. Understand and apply critical methods of Biblical interpretation;
- D. Describe and critique the major questions of OT scholarship and study (authorship, historicity, etc.);
- E. Narrate the essential elements of Israelite history and religion;
- F. Articulate the on-going authority of the Old Testament as canonical Scripture;
- G. Use the Old Testament more effectively in ministry.

III. TEXTS

William S. Lasor, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. **OTS**

Richard E. Friedman. *Who Wrote the Bible?* 2nd ed. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997. **WWB**

Levenson, Jon D. *Sinai & Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. New York: Harper Collins, 1985.

H. Shanks, ed. *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. Rev. ed. Biblical Archaeology Society and Prentice Hall, 1999. **AI**

James B. Pritchard, ed. *The HarperCollins Concise Atlas of the Bible* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997). **ATLAS**

First Class Account

It is imperative that you open a First Class Account at the Seminary. A folder for this class to which only you as members of OT520 have access is open for your use. A discussion/message board will be available for use throughout the term in order to facilitate greater dialogue between students and between you and me. Questions, comments, and hints are always welcome on this site. Additionally, all hand-outs, powerpoint slides, etc. will be available here.

III. EVALUATION

Grade Scale

A 100-93	B 86-83	C 76-73	D 66-63
A- 92-90	B- 82-80	C- 72-70	D- 62-60
B+ 89-87	C+ 79-77	D+ 69-67	F 59-0

** "A" work at Asbury Theological Seminary is defined as "Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives" (*Catalog*, p. 28). To achieve "A" level, students must demonstrate a critical engagement and synthetic understanding of the course materials.

I take grading very seriously. It is my responsibility to evaluate your work and give you a letter grade. I hope to do this in the spirit of Ephesians 4:15-16 "But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."

I will be clear (to the best of my abilities) about my expectations for each assignment.

- 1) Completion of all reading. This entails following the reading schedule posted below and turning in weekly *Lessons and Puzzles*. This will be a short (1 pg. single spaced) collections of the key learnings that you gleaned from the week's reading as well as any questions or problems that you experienced with the text. These are due by the beginning of class whether you are present or not. If you have to be absent, it is your responsibility to e-mail it or send it with a friend. **I will not accept late reading reports. (10%)**
- 2) 3 Take Home Essays – Spread over the course of our 13 weeks will be three essays that you will be asked to write which will help you to synthesize your understanding of the main themes of the course. This will be open-note, open-book, but it will require no *extra* outside reading. Each essay is to be no more than 3-4 double-spaced pages using Times New Roman 12" font with 1" margins on all sides. ***Due dates for these are spread evenly throughout the semester.*** 45% (15% EACH)
- 3) Critical Book Review of Levenson's, *Sinai and Zion* (see required works above) 20%
Due Nov 12
- 4) One of the Following: 1) Final Exam during Exam Week or 2) Research paper 25%

IV. Reading Assignments

As you complete the reading, use the following guides:

Two broad questions: 1) what significant learnings have I acquired through a careful reading of this book? 2) What questions do I have about the material (these questions may be confusing points made by the author or issues that you wished the author would have raised)? In addition to these, reflect upon the following:

A. *Old Testament Survey* – This is a standard introductory Old Testament textbook written from an evangelical perspective. The majority of the text focuses on the content and composition of the Old Testament, but the last part of the book focuses on other important issues germane to biblical study (e.g., inspiration, archaeology, geography, etc). Keep in mind the following issues as you read and take notes: What critical issues troubled you most? What critical issues brought you new insight? What questions do you have about the Old Testament literature and issues surrounding its study?

B. *Ancient Israel* – This is an excellent survey of Israelite history from a moderately critical perspective. As you read each chapter, take note of the author's methodology and sources: What extra-biblical materials are available to reconstruct each historical period? What tensions exist between the biblical record and the extra-biblical sources? How does the author resolve the tension?

As you reflect upon these issues, keep the big question in mind: To what extent does the trustworthiness and authority of Scripture depend upon its complete accuracy in historical detail?

What lessons did you learn from the book? Questions?

C. *Who Wrote the Bible?* – This is an engaging book written for a popular audience from a moderately critical perspective. It walks its readers through a brief history of scholarly attempts to understand the composition of the Bible while at the same time arguing for a particular construal of the origin of the Pentateuch and Joshua-Kings.

How persuasive is Friedman's proposal? In your opinion, does such a theory add to or take away from the authority of Scripture?

What insights did you glean? Questions?

The above readings will supplement our classroom discussions and lectures. Keep the Atlas handy as you read and bring it to class for reference. If you don't know the geography of Israel well, make this a learning objective. It will be an additional means of enhancing interpretation and understanding of texts.

The lecture pace may be faster or slower than the reading schedule. Regardless, follow the below schedule in terms of reading.

V. Attendance

Class attendance is a necessity for successful completion of the course requirements. You may miss two three hour blocks without penalty. A loss of one grade level (A to A-) will result from absences in excess of this for each 3 hours missed.

VI. SCHEDULE (The following topics are tentative. Depending on time, more or less will be covered in lecture) Stay on top of the reading. The assignment for each date refers to the reading due by the *next* class period.

- 9/3** Course Introduction; Why study the Old Testament? The Need for Critical Interpretation?
Read: Ps 1, 19, 119, 2 Tim 3:14-17; Deut. 6; OTS 585-694
- 9/10** The Canon of the OT; Textual Criticism; Geography
Read: Gen 1-2; AI 1-89
- 9/17** Creation; Archaeology and the OT
Read: Gen. 3-11; Deut. 26; AI 91-129
- 9/24** History of Ancient Near East
Read: Gen. 12, 15, 17, Exod. 3, 6, 13-15, Jos 1-10; AI 129-200
- 10/1** Israelite History: Abraham to the Settlement
Read: Deut. 17, 1 Sam 7-12, 1kgs 12-13, Amos 7, AI 201-98
- 10/8** Israelite History: Monarchy to the Maccabees
Read: OTS 1-79
- 10/15** Critical Introduction to the Pentateuch: Source Criticism
Read: Gen 12, 15, 17, Exod 14, 19-20; OTS 80-152, WWB 13-50
- 10/22** Pentateuch; Covenant
Read: Lev. 1-7, Num 13-16, Dtr 6-11, WWB 50-135, OTS 153-81
- 10/29** Evangelical Response to Pentateuchal Criticism; The Former Prophets: Jos – Kings
Read: Isa 1-6, Amos 1-2, Hos 1-3, OTS 182-211, WWB 136-245
- 11/5** Prophets and Prophecy in Israel: The Eighth Century and beyond
Read: Exod 15:1-21, Judg 5, Pss. 2, 73, 77-78, 118, 150, Prov 1-8, OTS 212-327
- 11/12** The Poetry of Ancient Israel; Wisdom and the Sages
Read: Num 12, Judges 4, 2 Kings 22:14-20, Ruth, Prov 31, OTS 328-69, 425-470
- 11/19** Women and the Feminine in Ancient Israel; Apocalyptic
Read: Ps 136, Deut 28, 2 Kings 17, Isa 53, Exod 32-34, OTS 471-582
- 12/3** Issues in Old Testament Theology
Final Take Home Essay Due
- 12/10** Research paper due or Final Exam. All other late work due by 2:30 PM.